

## Review Essays

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Tatiana Gabroussenko, *Soldiers on the Cultural Front:  
Developments in the Early Literary History of North Korean  
Literature and Literary Policy*

Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2010, 239 pp.

Tatiana Gabroussenko's *Soldiers on the Cultural Front* is the second book in English on North Korean literature to be published after sixteen years. An abridgement and revision of a 2004 dissertation written at Australian National University and supervised by North Korea historian Andrei Lankov, the work argues with empirical evidence that Soviet Stalinist socialist realism was successfully implanted in North Korea from 1945 to 1960. As suggested by a reference to a 2000 research trip on page one of the original dissertation, the study involved at least four years of research, with consultation of archival sources, colonial-era and North Korean literature, and Korean and Soviet participants in North Korean history ("Implantation" 1).

Gabroussenko's book is divided into five chapters, which are more objective than the unfortunately disparaging, hostile, and moralizing introduction and conclusion. The first chapter deals with literary patterns and themes in North Korean writers' Soviet travelogs; the second to fourth are biographies of the contrastingly fated party writers Cho Ki-chŏn, Yi Ki-yŏng, and Yi T'ae-jun; and the fifth is about party critics as political executioners. Surprisingly, the literature review in the introduction cites only two English-language works on North Korean literature, Marshall R. Pihl (1977) and Brian Myers (1994), when some twenty-two articles in English were available in academic journals by 2010, when *Soldiers on the Cultural Front* was published.<sup>1</sup> Odder still are seven pages of introductory discussion on Soviet socialist realism without explicating the North Korean understanding of socialist realism.

The discussion on Soviet socialist realism, however, reveals that the "ascetic, militant" socialist realism of the Soviet 1930s and 1940s is what North Korea adopted. Gabroussenko does not clearly define socialist realism, but attributes it to a statement by Stalin in 1932, though it was Ivan Gronskey who introduced the term that year; claims the "real meaning" is in Lenin's "Party Organization and Party Literature" from 1905; and mentions Zhdanov at the Soviet Writers' Congress in 1934,

but not his landmark speech “Soviet Literature.” Here, the association with Lenin is an old mistake and actually repeats Zhdanov in 1946.<sup>2</sup> As for what unites socialist realist literatures, Gabroussenko says it is the “Purpose [...] to serve the state and society ruled by a Leninist Party” (*Soldiers* 10). The last two words should be read as “Stalinist party.”<sup>3</sup>

Lenin’s 1905 speech, it must be underlined, was not addressing “science, philosophy, or aesthetics,” but the problem of “literary supermen” (i.e., Nietzschean intellectuals) and the necessity of writing party documents in accordance with the perspective, program, and principles *within* the workers’ party (“Party Organisation”; see Eagleton 38; Read 82). The position is the same as in Karl Kautsky’s “The Intellectuals and the Workers” (1903). Kautsky, as is known, strongly influenced Lenin.

On the term “Stalinist party,” it is consistent with Gabroussenko’s reference to “North Korean Stalinism” and North Korean “national Stalinism,” the latter term coming from her supervisor Andrei Lankov, who appropriated it from Ivan T. Berend, the historian of Central and Eastern Europe (Gabroussenko, *Soldiers* 1, 2, 25; Lankov, *From Stalin* xii, 99, 99n39, 195). Berend defines Stalinism as a “strongly nationalistic” phenomenon based on Stalin’s theory to “build up socialism in one country,” a regime with “monolithic party-state structures,” a form of “state socialism,” and a policy “line” (39, 42, 114, 129, 158, 173, 289).

Gabroussenko’s first chapter suggests that Soviet clichés, motifs, and patterns entered North Korean literature through the travelogs of party writers who went on staged trips to the Soviet Union in 1947, 1952, and 1954. Social idylls she identifies are as follows:

- The “industrialized paradise”
- The “agricultural paradise”
- The “educational and cultural paradise”
- The “center” and “last hope of the world”

Reference is made to eight million Soviet books in North Korea from 1945 to 1954 and to the policy of assimilating Soviet culture and literature, but it is mostly through travelogs that Gabroussenko speaks of “major borrowings of Soviet discourse” (*Soldiers* 18). Cultural adaptations are noted; North Korean novels, poems, and short stories from the late 1940s, 1950s, early 1960s, 1990s, and early 2000s are consulted; and an un-Soviet “racism” in North Korean fiction is alleged.

Though theoretically unremarkable, the first chapter is the most valuable from a comparatist point of view, as it confirms the cross-cultural intertextuality between Soviet and North Korean literature, noting cultural differences (e.g., more sentimentalism), as well as Stalin-era survivals in contemporary North Korean literature. Gabroussenko’s claim that anti-American and anti-Japanese stereotypes in North Korean literature achieved a level of racism “unimaginable” in the Soviet

Union, however, is cast in doubt by the second chapter on Soviet Army officer Cho Ki-chŏn (1913–1951), the father of North Korean poetry, whom recent North Korean sources accolade as the “Pushkin of Korea.”<sup>4</sup>

Cho was born to a family of ethnic Korean peasants in the Soviet Far East and had published poetry since he was seventeen. A precocious, popular, and politically uncompromising university student in Omsk, he hoped to study in Moscow in the 1930s, but was detained there, racist laws forbidding forcefully resettled Soviet Koreans from leaving their territories. Cho worked as a lecturer and translator, joined the army, and was sent to North Korea. He introduced Soviet form, images, and style and was among the first to initiate the cult of Soviet Army-appointed leader Kim Il Sung with the heroic epic poem “Mount Paekdu” (Paekdusan, 1948), a work that was praised by “many young people” and enjoyed “public interest,” according to Gabroussenko (*Soldiers* 59).

Since her focus is not literary reader-response in the masses, but party politics, party writers, and party criticism, Gabroussenko eventually forgets her reference to Cho’s popularity among North Korean readers. This shortcoming reflects the influence of her supervisor Lankov, whose history scholarship focuses on elites, not the people. Despite bureaucratic control, North Korean literature was being written to influence the masses, thus requiring attention to the mass reader, without whom the socialist realist work does not exist. When Gabroussenko turns to Yi Ki-yŏng (1895–1984) in the third chapter, the North Korean reader is not investigated, the aim, as with Cho, being literary biography.

Yi was of peasant background like Cho, but unlike the Soviet Korean, he was born on the Korean peninsula and only had an elementary school education. A wanderer in his young adulthood, Yi was a gifted writer and became a major literary figure in the colonial era, as well as a member of the left-nationalist Korean Artists Proletarian Federation (KAPF). Whereas Cho’s style was apparently influenced by the Kazakh folk eulogist Dzhambaev and Soviet poets Isakovsky and Mayakovsky, Yi absorbed Japanese, Spanish, and Soviet socialist realist influences, especially Gorky and Sholokov, combining them with agrarian nationalism, (Neo) Confucian morality, folklore, legends, and sentimentalism. His most canonical novel in North Korea is *Land* (Ttang, 1948–1949).

Gabroussenko tends to make implicit demands for realism on Yi’s nationalist allegories (reviewer’s term) in North Korea, speaking of his “stiff dualism of good versus evil,” “cartoonish villains,” “conventions of a fairy tale,” and “fairy-tale monsters” (*Soldiers* 94, 95, 100).<sup>5</sup> She also refers to a “complete utilitarianism” and a “black-and-white didactic contrast” that is not fitting for a “literary piece” (101). But this is an opinion, based on Gabroussenko’s intuitions of the literary. Opinions and intuitions, being prone to accident, are unreliable in objective literary scholarship.<sup>6</sup> Besides, Yi’s writing reflects Gorky’s approving statements at the 1934 Soviet

Writers' Congress on folklore, legend, morality, and myth in relation to socialist realist literature (see Gorky; Robin 51–55).

After Yi Ki-yŏng, the fourth chapter looks at Yi T'ae-jun (1904–1974?).<sup>7</sup> Yi was the son of a school teacher, who died when Yi was five, and his mother ran an eatery. He was academically talented, a wanderer, and a book reader with a fondness for Tolstoy. Yi had some college education and, after becoming a renowned writer, taught college courses. Although he was a politically conscious individual, Yi associated with the “pure art” movement of the Nine Members Club, a rival of the proletarianist KAPF, focusing on technique instead of politics. After the 1945 U.S.-Soviet liberation, occupation, and division of Korea, he moved north, admiring “Communism” as a “moral code” (*Soldiers* 117). He sided with the Soviet and Domestic factions in the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK).

Yi's prose underwent a political transformation in the north, and by 1949, he was writing in a “purely functional propagandistic” mode (119, 121). With Soviet Korean patronage, he was celebrated, but in 1953, after the Korean War (1950–1953), an anti-Yi defamation campaign was launched by the ex-KAPF supporters of Kim Il Sung's increasingly powerful guerrilla faction in the WPK. Yi was purged in 1956 and exiled in 1957. In Gabroussenko's estimation, however, Yi's writing “perfectly fit the North Korean Stalinist discourse” (132). What this means is that it was not literary criteria, but political agendas and intrigues that led to his downfall and erasure from North Korean literary history.

Political interests before aesthetics is the basic theme of the fifth and final chapter of *Soldiers on the Cultural Front*. Gabroussenko addresses double standards and surveys attacks against writers in the north, the first major case being the 1947 incident over the melancholic poetry anthology *Hidden Fragrance* (Ŭnhyang, 1946).<sup>8</sup> Mirroring the 1946 Soviet Stalinist condemnation (headed by Zhdanov) of Akhmatova and Zoschenko, the anthology was denounced for decadence, escapism, and skepticism. Gabroussenko proceeds to the brief factional clash over Cho's “Mount Paekdu” (1948), the purging of factions and allied writers, and the development of “collective authorship” in the 1960s.

While there is useful and valuable material in the five chapters in *Soldiers on the Cultural Front*, the conclusion reverts to the detractions made in the introduction, that North Korean literature is uniform, ugly, uncomplex, unoriginal, unheretical, and uninspiring (1). The study ends by saying North Korean narratives are dull, stereotyped, and lifeless; alleging “near-complete absence of readership attention” in South Korea as “proof” that the literature is artistically deficient; and adding the final point that North Korean readers are “long-suffering,” without education, entertainment, and hope in the national literature.<sup>9</sup> None of these claims are supported with evidence or references, and they appear to be projections of deep emotive prejudices Gabroussenko publically admitted to in 2005:

Many years ago, being a fresh student of Korean studies, I attended “Kkot p’anun ch’onyo” [*The Flower Girl*, 1972] at Moscow Bolshoi Theatre—mostly, for educational purposes. It was given by a North Korean group on tour. Since the very beginning it became clear to me that it would not be the best time in my life. Three or four hours of loud cries, stilted sentimental garbage and blatant propaganda, the time, which I prepared to spend yawning and giggling. But I then looked around and found something unexpected. I was, probably, the only non-Korean person in the whole theatre, most of the public constituted middle-aged or old Soviet Koreans. And those people around took the opera deadly serious! They were fully attentive, they cried, not giggled, at the pathetic moments. And they were too numerous to be just paid agents of Pyongyang.

It made me reconsider the situation. I still did not like the opera. But it came to me that it must be much more than simple propagandistic exercise of Stalinist type.[sic] Surely, the opera evoked some essential cultural images that touched the Soviet Korean public so much. The images which I, as an outsider barely familiar with Korean culture, just did not sense. (“[KS] Finding a Videotape”)

Comparatists will recognize this passage as a case of Soviet Orientalism.<sup>10</sup> In the recollection, a non-Korean Soviet undergraduate attended a North Korean revolutionary opera touring Moscow. She laughed and mocked the production as unnatural and emotional “garbage,” only to notice that those around her were older ethnic Korean minorities, responding to the opera with earnestness and tears. Suddenly, the young Soviet thought there might be “much more” to the opera, “essential cultural images,” images of the Other that she as an “outsider” to the Korean ethnic experience “just did not sense.” But while she was able to “reconsider” things for a moment, she was “still” hostilely disposed.

*Soldiers on the Cultural Front* reproduces the basic normative framework of the 2005 account, which begins hostilely and ends hostilely. Gabroussenko’s deceptions, needless to say, are analytically invalid, since they communicate *feelings toward* an object, *not facts about* an object.<sup>11</sup> On North Korean literature, South Korean scholar Paik Nak-chung says, “[Q]uite apart from various *practical problems*, passing judgment on such works is something that critics who are *in the dark* concerning North Korean social realities and literary-artistic customs must undertake with *extreme caution*” (198, emphasis added). In the case of South Korean readers and the novel *Sea of Blood* (*P’ibada*, 1973), Paik explains:

In actuality, it is extremely difficult to place *P’ibada* accurately in the *experience* of South Korean readers. The content itself, which, while dealing with the armed anti-Japanese struggle by communists, repeatedly emphasizes that revolution is the only alternative, is *unfamiliar* and even threatening to readers in the south;

but the difficulty in placing it “in the right niche” does not derive from that alone. The whole atmosphere or makeup of the novel does not easily fit into the *notion* of “serious” versus “popular” literature to which South Koreans are *accustomed* in domestic and foreign works. Measured against the customary standard of artistic refinement, *P’ibada* clearly contains many elements of popular literature. On the other hand, there are virtually no examples of popular literature with which I am acquainted where the level of earnestness associated with serious literature is sustained as much as in *P’ibada*. Apart from the fact that its subject matter or political message could coexist with notions of the “popular” in the south, its dedication to and practiced skill in choosing and refining pure vernacular Korean alone would have to be judged a *not inconsiderable achievement* in South Korea’s present circumstances. (198; emphasis added)<sup>12</sup>

Paik made this observation in 1995, five years before the historic inter-Korean summit of June 2000, which ushered literary exchanges between North and South Korea, as well as a substantial increase in the quantity and quality of South Korean scholarship on North Korean literature, not to mention the awarding of North Korean novelist Hong Sök-jung’s *Hwang Jin Yi* (2002) with the South Korean Manhae Prize for Literature in 2004 and the adaptation of the historical novel as the South Korean film of the same name in 2007. Still, what Paik highlights is that North Korean literature is generally *outside* the experiential and notional fields of South Korean culture and reader-response.

North Korean literature is the literature of an Other country, to rework the phrase of historian Bruce Cumings’ *North Korea: Another Country*. The national literature is different, distinct, or opposite, with its own peculiar *history of modes, ethics of symbols, archetypes of myths, and rhetoric of genres*.<sup>13</sup> While there might be “vernacular” connections to South Korea, it is “extremely difficult” to fit the literature into the South Korean social context, because of the contrasting social history, social structure, and social character since 1945. Paik’s admonition that scholars must judge North Korean literature with “extreme caution” is also important, for literary phenomenology *inside* North Korea is presently unknown.

What is meant here by “phenomenology” is how psychological facts appear to social consciousness, and what is meant by “literary phenomenology” is the subjective mental process of intending, producing, reading, and responding to literature in the social and individual world of empirically lived experience. Wolfgang Iser says, “The convergence of text and reader brings the literary work into existence,” and, “With all literary texts [. . .] the reading process is selective, and the potential text is infinitely richer than any of its individual realizations” (275, 280). These points also apply to academic readers outside North Korea, who must be poised to “absorb” an unfamiliar experience.

Reading reflects the structure of experience to the extent that *we must suspend the ideas and attitudes that shape our personality* before we can experience the unfamiliar world of the literary text. (291)

Once the reader is entangled, his own preconceptions are continually overtaken, so that the text becomes his “present” while his own ideas fade into the “past”; as soon as this happens he is *open to the immediate experience of the text*, which was impossible so long as his preconceptions were his present. (290)

Neither of these procedures is fulfilled in *Soldiers on the Cultural Front* nor in the public statement that preceded it five years earlier. The story-worlds of North Korean literary texts remain fundamentally closed through a combination of value-judgment, naive induction, and extra-literary specialization determinism (see Frye 12, 15, 16, 22). When Gabroussenko uses the phrase “essential cultural symbols,” it is not clear how she employs the word “essential.” But it is precisely literary cultural symbols, as manifested through intra-Asiatic and cross-cultural intertextuality, that are of interest in the comparative study of North Korean literature and its phenomenology, that is, its shaping in the imagination of the reader (Iser 277).

Gabroussenko does not date her encounter with *The Flower Girl*, but if it occurred in the 1980s, the “middle-aged or old” Soviet Koreans in attendance would have been children or youths in the Soviet 1930s, when Stalin forcefully resettled Korean national minorities to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, instituted anti-Korean laws, and purged and murdered ethnic Koreans in the Soviet Communist Party on suspicion of Koreans being Japanese spies (see Kuromiya 140; Naimark 87, 135; and Rogovin 10, 12–13). *The Flower Girl* would connect to the Soviet Koreans for several possible reasons: the prominent role of *han/pathos* in Korean cultural narratives; the oppression and trauma of the protagonist under colonialism and landlordism; and the hardship, loss, and poverty she experiences.<sup>14</sup>

“The manner in which the reader experiences the text will reflect his own disposition, and in this respect the literary text acts as a kind of mirror” (Iser 281). Whereas the Soviet Korean audience at the Moscow Bolshoi Theater might have felt their personal suffering or the suffering of their parents in *The Flower Girl*, the disposition the North Korean text mirrored for Gabroussenko was her dislike of “simple propagandistic exercise[s] of [the] Stalinist type,” a sentiment that is also felt in *Soldiers on the Cultural Front*. The orientation of identity with Soviet Stalinism, however, is a false identity, and combined with emotive assertions, such an approach misapprehends and misunderstands North Korean literary symbols, modes, genres, and archetypes.

While North Korean leader Kim Il Sung rejected the Soviet tactic of “de-Stalinization” in 1955 and established “one of the most efficient Stalinist regimes ever to have existed” after the Great Purge of the WPK in 1956 to 1960, North Korea

is *not* the Soviet Union, and North Korean literature should not be regarded as a simulacrum of Soviet socialist realist literature (Lankov, “Kim Takes Control”; see also Lankov, *Crisis*). There are, to be sure, Soviet Stalinist intertextual correlates in North Korean postcolonial narratives, but there are also differences. “[L]iterary criticism,” which “helps to make conscious those aspects of the text which would otherwise remain concealed in the subconscious,” must appreciate the native/foreign dialectic in North Korean literature (Iser 290).

Related to the problem of appreciation is also that of representation. Gabroussenko writes herself into *Soldiers on the Cultural Front*, doing an inadvertent autobiography with a power relationship between the author-subject (Gabroussenko) and the text-object (North Korean literature). Gabroussenko, especially in her introduction and conclusion, both implies and imposes herself onto the material in the form of a personal discourse that employs the demonstrable value-judgment, something that “looks” objective when it is fashionable. The value-judgment, all the while, is an illusion of taste, the “donkey’s carrot of literary criticism,” subjective and non-factual in the study of literature (Frye 21).

Overt signs of the value-judging author are seen in *Soldiers on the Cultural Front* in a definite authorial attitude carried over from the first hostile encounter the young Gabroussenko had with North Korean “revolutionary opera” at the Moscow Bolshoi Theater “many years ago.” While she now claims to be a “reader of North Korean fiction with more than twenty years’ experience,” she readily adopts the “extremely dismissive” view that North Korean “cultural life” is a “great dessert of unalleviated mediocrity and monotony,” a claim made by two non-literary specialists, Robert A. Scalapino and Chong-Sik Lee, in 1972 (*Soldiers* 1). An important qualification Gabroussenko omits from Scalapino and Lee, though, is the introductory phrase “From an external perspective” (890).

Still, when the political scientists’ words were written, it was *only twenty-seven years* after the national division of Korea, *twenty-four years* after the founding of North Korea, and *nineteen years* after U.S. bombing totally destroyed the country in the Korean War (see Armstrong, “Destruction”; Cumings, *Korean War*). Scalapino and Lee were unreasonably demanding a *modern* twentieth-century literature with “deep complexities,” a “range of human emotions,” and “apolitical sentiments” from a postcolonial national-Stalinist society, emerging from semifeudal capitalism, that incorporated the archaic, allegorically minded, and formerly illiterate peasant masses into the party and system (see Armstrong, *North Korean Revolution* 75, 149–150, 226). Gabroussenko, as in the 1972 case, never considers these social and psychological factors, but remains confident in her orientation.

As early as 1946, when Kim Il Sung first used the Russian-derived phrase “combatants on the cultural front” (Gabroussenko’s version is mistranslated) and established the policy to assimilate Soviet culture, he ordered Korean writers to “write

only in a language they [the masses] can understand” and to use “simple spoken and written language” (Kim, “Workers in Culture” 3).<sup>15</sup> In 1951, during the Korean War, Kim also told writers to make “extensive use” of Korean popular literature, orature, and folksongs, as well as to study Soviet, Chinese, and Eastern bloc literature (Kim, “On Some Questions” 11). North Korean literature was brought down to the level of mass consciousness and made appropriations from world literature; yet this is not something one learns from Gabroussenko.

*Soldiers on the Cultural Front* does not appreciate the *comparative* and *literary* components of North Korean literature, and that is caused by the long absence of a self-conscious theoretical model of literary interpretation by literary criteria, North Korean studies being dominated by economists, political scientists, and social scientists. Indeed, Gabroussenko declares disinterest in the “theoretical problems of literary studies” and “largely deals with historical, biographical, and political issues,” reductively seeing North Korean literature as nothing more than “propaganda” (*Soldiers* 1, 5). The critical approach she uses turns out to be a naive inductive form of early twentieth-century biographical criticism with value-judgments.

North Korean literary studies in English, long subordinated to and determined by non-literary academic specializations, is in significant need of a *literary theoretical* reorientation. This is necessary for an objective account of North Korean literature in its production, reception, and development. Presently, Tatiana Gabroussenko’s *Soldiers on the Cultural Front* provides empirical confirmation that Soviet Stalinist socialist realism was successfully implanted in North Korea and reveals cross-cultural intertextuality between Soviet and North Korean literature. Nevertheless, the complex links and forces of world literature in North Korean literary history and the role of the mass reader, the formerly illiterate and uneducated Korean peasant whom the party taught how to read, have not been examined.

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#### NOTES

- 1 Gabroussenko’s findings refute the claim of Myers that socialist realism failed in North Korea. See further discussion in David-West, “Savage Nature and Noble Spirit.”
- 2 See exploitation of the 1905 speech in Zhdanov 37–38.
- 3 On the Stalinization of the Leninist party, see Lewin 14–16, 301–307. See also the Glasgow University lecture by North.
- 4 The Korean phrase “Chosŏn-ui Ppushyukkin” appears in three Korean Central News Agency articles online: “Rosshiya pangmun-ŭi nanal-e issun ilhwa/Chonsŏn-ŭi Ppushyukkin” (Anecdote of a Day Visiting Russia/“The Pushkin of Korea,” 29 Aug. 2001; “Changgunnim kwa ilhwa (8)” (The General and Anecdotes [8]), 29 Aug. 2001; and “Shi wa hamkke yŏngsaenhanun hyŏngmyŏng shiin—Cho Ki-chŏn” (Poetry and

- the Eternally Living Revolutionary Poet—Cho Ki-ch'ŏn), 23 Aug. 2008. See also “Anecdotes about Kim Jong Il during His Russia Visit,” 29 Aug. 2001, and “Anecdotes about Kim Jong Il,” 23 Aug. 2002.
- 5 On nationalist allegory, which is distinctive from Fredric Jameson’s national allegory, see David-West, “Nationalist Allegory,” “Reading *Sea of Blood*,” “Savage Nature and Noble Spirit.”
  - 6 “For it is notorious that what seems intuitively certain to one person may seem doubtful, or even false, to another. So that unless it is possible to provide some criterion by which one may decide between conflicting intuitions, a mere appeal to intuition is worthless as a test of a proposition’s validity” (Ayer 106).
  - 7 Gabroussenko lists “1904–?” and “1904–1969,” later informing the reader of Yi’s 1974 exile to Kangwondo after his second purge (*Soldiers* 12, 72, 131).
  - 8 Despite condemnation by the northern Korean authorities, publication of a collection of melancholic poems was in keeping with literary precedents set by *Dance of Anguish* (Onoe-ŭi mudo, 1921), the first volume of Western poetry in Korean translation, and Kim Ŏk’s *Songs of Jellyfish* (Haep’ari-ui norae, 1923), the first volume of new verse by a single Korean poet. The former work “became a basic text for aspiring poets until the 1940s,” and the latter was “imbued with symbolist languor” and the tenor of “autumnal sorrow.” See Lee, Glossary xli; Lee, Introduction xvii; Lee, “Early Twentieth-Century” 343.
  - 9 The last point is at odds with a brief report by Sonia Ryang on North Korean urban reading culture. A professor of anthropology and international studies at the University of Iowa, Ryang was raised in the North Korean community in Japan and visited North Korea three times with the Ch’ongryŏn/Chosen Soren organization from 1981 to 1985. She observed many avid readers in Pyongyang, who “craved fiction,” “read everywhere,” and did so “primarily for fun,” in her assessment (22–23).
  - 10 Soviet Orientalism was a carryover from the Russocentricism of the Stalin era. Soviet studies historian David Brandeberger explains that, in the prewar Soviet Union, ethnic Russians were the “first among equals” and that non-Russian minorities were seen through the lens of a paternalist “Stalinist Orientalism,” as exotic, frozen in time, and premodern (93).
  - 11 For example, just because one does not like toads, that does not mean unlikeableness inheres in toads. Disliking and liking are “pure expressions of feeling,” which “do not come under the category of truth and falsehood. They are unverifiable [. . .] because they do not express genuine propositions” (Ayer 108–109).
  - 12 See *Sea of Blood: The Novel*.
  - 13 These categories are adapted from Northrop Frye’s *Anatomy of Criticism*.
  - 14 Officially, *The Flower Girl* (Kkot p’anun ch’ŏnyo, 1972) was produced under the direction of late North Korean leader Kim Jong Il and is based on a work reportedly written by Kim Il Sung during his “activities to enlighten the peasants in Wujiazi, China, in 1930” at the time of the anti-colonial, anti-Japanese struggle (Mu; see Kim, “4.9”). Kim was a member of the Manchurian section of the Chinese Communist Party and fought as a guerrilla commander under the party organization. See an academic biography of Kim in Suh. As with the other North Korean “revolutionary operas,” such as the pre-eminent *Sea of Blood*, *The Flower Girl* is a nationalist allegory and part of the post-colonial heroic legend of Kim Il Sung. *The Flower Girl* received a special prize and

medal at the 18th Karlovy Vary International Film Festival in Czechoslovakia in 1972 (*Profile of Secretary* 23; see David-West “Nationalist Allegory”).

- 15 Kim's 1946 speech, “Workers in Culture Should Become Combatants on the Cultural Front,” is originally titled “Munhwaindŭl-ŭn munhwa chŏnsŏn-ŭi t'usa-ro doeŏya handa.” *T'usa* means “combatant” or “fighter.” The word for “soldier” is *kunin*. Gabrous-senko says her cited slogan is Kim's variation of Stalin's “engineers of the human soul” (17). That is mistaken. It is an adaptation of Stalin's 1925 “cultural front” and the 1928 Soviet phrase “soldiers of culture” (*kul'tarmeetsy*). Kim Il Sung lived in the Soviet Union from 1941 to 1945, after he and his anti-colonial Manchurian guerrillas were defeated by the Japanese Imperial Army. He served in the Soviet Army and, following the U.S.-Soviet liberation of Korea in 1945, was selected as a leader by the Soviet occupation command. Soviet forces left northern Korea three months after it was established as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on 9 September 1948. The Republic of Korea, in the south, was founded on 15 August 1948.

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